



Decision Memo Walton Lake Sno-Park Groomer Shed

USDA Forest Service
Lookout Mountain Ranger District
Ochoco National Forest
Crook County, State
T. 13 S., R. 20 E., Section 22

Background

The Lookout Mountain Ranger District has received a request from Ochoco Snow Sports to construct a groomer shed at the Walton Sno-Park. The groomer shed is needed to provide secure storage of the State-owned groomer Ochoco Snow Sports uses to maintain snowmobile trails during the winter months.

Decision

I have decided to authorize construction of a groomer shed. The groomer shed would be approximately 30 feet by 60 feet in size and would be located between Roads 2200-135 and 2200-140 across from the Walton Sno-Park. The project area is located about 33 miles east of Prineville, Oregon in the Upper Ochoco Creek Watershed. The legal description of the project area is T. 13 S., R. 20 E., Section 22, NW 1/4, Willamette Meridian. A map displaying the location of the groomer shed is attached.

To reduce the risk of spreading noxious weeds, any ground-disturbing equipment used to construct the groomer shed would be cleaned of all soil and plants parts that could introduce weeds.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment because it falls within a category of actions described in FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 31.2(3) and would not have any individually or cumulative significant environmental effects. Category 3 describes approval of minor special uses of National Forest System lands that require less than 5 contiguous acres of land.

Extraordinary Circumstances

The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment.

Several resource conditions were considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed groomer shed warrant further analysis. The mere presence of one or more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion. It is the degree of the potential effect on these resource conditions that determines whether extraordinary circumstances exist. Resource conditions that were considered are described below.

Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated habitat or species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species

Biological evaluations were prepared for terrestrial, aquatic, and botanical species. This section summarizes the information and analysis contained in the biological evaluations prepared for this project. The three biological evaluations are contained in the project file. This section has been divided into federally listed species and Forest Service sensitive species.

Federally listed species

There are two federally listed as threatened aquatic species known or suspected to occur on the Ochoco National Forest. These species are steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). This project will have no effect on either steelhead trout or bull trout because there is no habitat within the Upper Ochoco Creek Watershed. There are no aquatic species that are federally listed as endangered that are known to occur on the Ochoco National Forest.

There are no federally listed botanical species known or suspected to occur on the Ochoco National Forest.

There is one federally listed as threatened wildlife species known to occur on the Ochoco National Forest: northern bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). No wildlife species federally listed as endangered are known to occur on the Ochoco National Forest. This project would have no effect on bald eagles because there are no activities planned near nest or roost sites and because the construction of the groomer shed is not expected to alter use of the area by bald eagles.

Forest Service Sensitive Species

There are five aquatic species on the Regional Forester's sensitive species list that are known or suspected to occur on the Ochoco National Forest. They are: Malheur mottled sculpin (*Cottus bairdi* spp.), mid-Columbia River spring chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), west slope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki clarki*), redband trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss* ssp.), and the Columbia spotted frog (*Rana luteiventris*). The Columbia spotted frog is also a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. This project would have no effect on any sensitive aquatic species because there is no habitat in the project area.

There are 28 botanical species on the Regional Forester's sensitive species list that are known or suspected to occur on the Ochoco National Forest. The project area does not contain potential habitat for any of these 28 species. The area where the groomer shed will be constructed is a highly-disturbed site that is occupied primarily by domestic wheatgrass. This project would have no impact to sensitive plant species because there is no habitat in the project area.

There are eight wildlife species on the Regional Forester's sensitive species list that are known or suspected to occur on the Ochoco National Forest. They are: Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*), upland sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*), western sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), gray flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*), tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*), pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*), and California

wolverine (*Gulo gulo*). This project would have no impact on seven of the eight species because there is no habitat in the project area. This project may impact individuals or habitat for the California wolverine because there is potential habitat near the project area. However, the area already contains designated snowmobile routes that have been in use for years, so the presence of a groomer shed would only slightly alter the level of human activity and disturbance.

Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds

There are no wetlands, floodplains, or municipal watersheds within or near the project area.

Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas

There are no Congressionally designated areas in or near the project area.

Inventoried roadless areas

There are no inventoried roadless areas (RARE II or Forest Plan) in or near the project area (LRMP FEIS, Appendix C).

Research natural areas

There are no research natural area in or near the project area.

American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas

Surveys were conducted for Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, and historic properties or areas that may be affected by this decision. No sites, historic properties, or historic areas were discovered. The nearest known site is more than 1/2 mile from the project area. This project has no effect on heritage sites and the qualities that make them eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

If a cultural/heritage resource site were newly discovered during construction of the groomer shed, efforts will be made to avoid any further disturbance. Site-specific mitigation will be determined if sites could not be avoided, and consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) will occur prior to resuming activities.

Public Involvement

A proposal to authorize construction of a shed to provide secure storage of the groomer used to maintain snowmobile trails was listed in the quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions on October 1, 2006. On August 17, 2006, the proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping. No comments were received as a result of public involvement efforts.

Findings Required by Other Laws

This decision is consistent with the Ochoco National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act. The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan decisions for developed recreation areas. The Forest Plan emphasis for developed recreation areas is to provide safe, healthful, and aesthetic facilities for people to utilize while they are pursuing a variety of recreational settings within a relatively natural outdoor setting. The groomer shed would be located next to the Walton Sno-park that serves as the trailhead for several snowmobile and cross-country ski trails.

Implementation Date

This project can be implemented immediately. It is anticipated that onstruction of the groomer shed would occur during the summer or fall months in 2007.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is not subject to administrative appeal.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Katherine Farrell at the Lookout Mountain Ranger District, 3160 NE Third Street, Prineville, OR 97754 or at (541) 416-6500.

/s/ Arthur J. Currier

12/19/06

ARTHUR J. CURRIER
District Ranger

Date

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